

Rewriting Music for Instrumentation Problems

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Size of Band								
	2015-16 LPHS Wind Symphony	2016-17 LPHS Wind Symphony	30-45	40-45	45-50	50-60	60-75	75-90
Flute	4 (1 doubles piccolo)	4 (1 doubles piccolo)	4 (1 doubles piccolo)	4 (1 doubles piccolo)	5 (1 doubles piccolo)	6 (1 doubles piccolo)	7 (1 doubles piccolo)	8 (1 doubles piccolo)
Oboe	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	3
Bassoon	0	1	1	2	2	2	2	4
Clarinet	5	6	8	9	10	12	14	16
Bass Clarinet	0	0 (Clarinet doubles as needed)	1	1	2	2	4	4
Contrabass Clarinet	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Alto Sax	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	4
Tenor Sax	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
Bari Sax	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Trumpet	3	5	6	6	6	8	9	10
Horn	1	2	4	4	4	5	6	8
Trombone	3 (1 bass trombone)	4 (1 bass trombone)	3	4	5	5 (1 bass trombone)	6 (1 bass trombone)	9 (1 bass trombone)
Euphonium	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	4
Tuba	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	6
String Bass	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	2
Percussion	3	4	3	4	4	5	6	6
Total	25	34	40	45	50	60	74	89

This chart is from *Teaching Band with Excellence* by Pearson and Nowlin, adapted for *Teaching Music through Performance in Band, Vol. 9*, chapter 6 by Richard Miles. I obviously added “LPHS”, but deleted English Horn and Alto Clarinet from the original chart.

The most important point:

It doesn't matter what the instrumentation is, maintaining the original sound and intent of the composer as much as possible is the priority.

Some basic questions to help make decisions about your audition placement or piece selection:

1. With what sound quality and balance do you want your band to perform?
2. What are your goals for the year or long term?
3. What music do you want to perform?
4. What are you willing to do? Or how much work or effort are you willing to do to achieve your goals?

Most important considerations for overcoming instrumentation issues

Individual Tone Quality

- Characteristic individual tone quality is most important, not volume or quantity.
- Poor tone quality leads to all sorts of other problems.
- A small band playing with great tone and intonation will sound louder and bigger than a small band trying too hard to sound like a large band. Bands that try too hard probably don't end up having great tone or intonation.
- Play recordings of solos for each instrument or the ones needed.

Ensemble tone quality and balance

- Getting the ensemble to understand the overall sound you want is critical early in the school year, then throughout.
- What's the correct ensemble balance? McBeth's triangle?

Intonation

- Achieving good intonation is always a process.
- If a student does not have characteristic tone quality, good intonation is almost impossible.
- Students must be able to hear poor intonation to be able to fix it.
- I use listening first for tuning – Harmony Director (or apps), other players. Then, if they can't fix it, I use a tuner so they can visualize the problem.

Quality music

- Choosing quality music is very important for our students' music education, their enjoyment, and our enjoyment.
- The music they play should showcase their strengths, not expose weaknesses.
- Even though not everyone likes every piece, pieces that are written well will at least give satisfaction to us as we rehearse it for several weeks and invest time into it.
- If I don't have the instrumentation to play it for judges (even by rewriting), then we'll play it at home. Parents don't know the difference.

Selecting music

Where I'll put my foot down – and not play it

Examples:

- Not enough players to cover percussion parts
- Important or extended solos on absent instruments
- Too many parts in the score (i.e. six trumpet parts)
- Can't fill out the section or chord without a full section
- Exposed sections need that specific timbre – rewriting to another instrument would ruin the integrity of the piece (at least for me)
- I would need to rewrite too much

Quality music (cont.)

Selecting music (cont.)

What I'm fine with trying

Examples:

- Marches
- Cross-cuing (for me, oboe/bassoon/horn parts that are covered elsewhere or could be easily rewritten elsewhere)
- Block scoring
- Some older pieces are good for small bands (i.e. Charles Carter's *Overture for Winds*)
- Flex band

Midwest Clinic music (www.midwestclinic.org)

- I love looking through the programs from last year's Midwest Clinic performances to get an idea of good literature.
- Usually, if it's performed at Midwest, it's good literature.
- I look at all performing bands (middle school, high school, university, professional) and at all grade levels.
- My Wind Symphony is not above performing good quality grade 2 pieces.

New (to you) compositions

- By looking through Midwest programs, I'll find some good new compositions and composers.
- I'll research the piece and composer and usually that leads to finding other pieces and composers.
- Teaching Music through Performance in Band
- The Wind Repertory Project (www.windrep.org)
- Ask other band directors, especially college directors

Seating and set up

- Set up is important, but critical with smaller ensembles.
 - Set up can affect volume, balance, intonation
 - Set up can affect confidence
- Experiment
- Now I just tell the top band at the beginning of the year that I will be experimenting with the set up as we rehearse and learn how we play.

Making the Decision to Rewrite

Resolving Balance Concerns

- Three ways balance problems can be resolved:
 - Adjust the instrumentation
 - Add or reduce the number of players on certain parts or lines
 - Edit or rewrite the parts

Won't judges disapprove of this?

- Most judges won't know unless they know the piece well
 - Usually, judges are looking down at the score and don't know how many horns you have
 - If rewriting was done well, they probably won't notice
- If one judge disapproves, it's probably opinion. If all three judges mention it, then the original integrity of the piece was compromised during rewriting.
- Most judges would understand
 - Judges want you to do well, so why not cover what's needed?
 - They want to hear a good representation of the piece performed
- Most judges have needed to rewrite for their own ensembles

Switching students to another instrument

- Difficult to do in smaller bands or programs
- Do you have an available student to switch?
- Will it really help now and actually work?
- Is the switch right for the student?
- How easy is the switch?
- Can you see the student eventually excelling or quitting?
- Are there upcoming students on this instrument so you can wait?

When is it appropriate to rewrite music?

- Missing and/or weak section
- Missing and/or weak soloist
 - Be careful you have a similar color
 - If a solo is extended, it is probably not a good idea to rewrite
- A musical line is absent – study the score
- It is more understandable in younger or smaller ensembles

How much rewriting is too much?

- When the musical integrity of the piece is compromised
- If it begins to degrade the original intent or sound
- When the ensemble sound or balance is not what is needed
- It's a standard repertoire piece and you don't have the correct color instruments

Important rules in rewriting music

- Remain as close to the original color as possible, especially in solos or exposed sections
- Always remain in the same octave as the original
 - Don't rewrite up or down an octave
 - If the octave is changed, so is the balance, color
- After rewriting, bring in other people to hear or clinic your band
 - If something needs addressing, they can help

Distributing parts for the first time

- Most of the time, I hand out the original part to the player with that instrument
- What I tell my students about cues
 - In general, play what we don't have. If we have it, I say "We have a very good player playing that instrument. You don't need to play it."
 - Two kinds of cues:
 - Playing cues – intended to help with missing or weak instruments
 - Understanding cues – intended to help understand the music during a player's rest
- Sometimes, my students never get the original part
 - Only if much rewriting is needed
 - i.e. *Sea Songs* – written for 2 trumpets and 2 cornets – I rewrote for my 3 trumpets

Software or hand written?

- Use software when:
 - Rewriting a long section or entire part
 - Should look good, published
 - Students receiving it shouldn't feel cheated out of a "real" part
 - You are fast with software
 - Your handwriting is not legible
- Hand write when:
 - Rewriting a short section or a couple notes
 - Sometimes I'll write a note or measure in student's parts (or have them write it – it's good for them and makes them feel like they're important in the fixing process)
 - Don't have much time
 - Only when you can make it look good

Instruments I've Had to Cover

Oboe

- Flute, clarinet, soprano or alto sax have been good options, depending on the passage
- I don't like to use trumpet with straight mute unless there is no other option
- Be careful of solos or sections with needed vibrato (then maybe not clarinet)

Bassoon

- Trombone, euphonium, tenor or bari sax, and tuba have been good options depending on the passage
- Be careful of solos or sections with needed vibrato
- Don't use trombone with straight mute

Saxes

- What? I had to for state festival this year with only two saxes – 1 alto and 1 tenor/bari
 - For Sea Songs I had him play bari because I wanted a low reed and buoyant sound rather than tenor (too similar to trombone part)
 - The other piece I had him play tenor since we had two tubas (bari part was similar) and I needed the woodwind tenor sound
- Clarinet, euphonium, tuba, horns (if available) have been good substitutes

Horn

- Depending on the scoring, trombone, euphonium, clarinet, and saxophone have been good options
- Sometimes trumpets, although they're a bit bright – try flugelhorn
- I've had saxes with nerf balls in their bells.
 - I rewrote the horn parts and called them saxohorn 1, 2, 3 and 4
 - In rehearsal, I told them to play if I ask for horns
- Upbeats
 - I've written out a lot of upbeats for trombones in marches
 - You can get away with not covering all horn parts in marches
 - As long as a strong horn player is playing one part, the written trombone parts are usually covering the chords from horn upbeats anyway
 - Not ideal but it works and nobody has complained about it
 - Make sure you cover all upbeat parts when in exposed sections

Tuba

- Covering tuba is vital – it must be covered
 - I've told my students (and their parents), "Not having tuba in band is like turning down the bass while listening to the radio)
- Very hard to mimic the full, round sound of tuba
- Bassoon, bass clarinet or contrabass, bari sax, string or electric bass, synthesizer have worked
- One year, my 2nd band had no tuba and two bari saxes. One always took everything (that was possible) down or read a tuba part.

Instruments I've Had to Cover (cont.)

Percussion

- The number of percussionists can determine what pieces the band plays
- Many new pieces are written with (too) many percussion parts
 - Look carefully at the writing to determine if your number can cover parts or you can leave some out
 - Are there easier parts that non-percussionist could play?
- Many older pieces have fewer percussion parts (but that makes them important, so cover them well)
- Frank Ticheli pieces (and several newer composers) usually have percussion written so what you see in the score is the number of players you need
- There's a lot of bad percussion writing
- Even not covering percussion well can ruin the integrity of the piece
- Marches
 - Buy a cymbal attachment for bass drum
 - Usually timpani is not needed even if there's a part
 - Just cover mallet parts in the trio, usually when they'll be heard the easiest anyway
- Concert pieces
 - Study the score to understand the percussion usage
 - Prioritize the percussion parts from most to least important
 - Always cover most important parts
 - What could be left out and not noticed?
 - What could be combined for one person to cover?
 - Can the players look at multiple parts or is writing a new super part necessary?

Instruments often missing, not used, or needing a boost

Fred J. Allen, Stephen F. Austin State University

Piccolo: If the piccolo doubles the flute, it can probably be left out.

Oboe: Vital color in band music, but often doubles other parts, especially in grades 1, 2 and 3. Look for solos or independent lines.

English horn: Vital as a solo color, but hard to hear in tutti. Look for solos or independent lines.

Bassoon: Becomes an indispensable color in Grade 5 and some pieces in grade 4, often shares line. Look for solos or independent lines.

Contrabassoon: Rarely appears with an independent line except in highest level music.

Eb Clarinet: If it doubles another part, it is not being used for its color, it may be deleted without changing the musical intent. Some publishers force composers to make an Eb clarinet (and alto clarinet) part even if they did not want to.

Alto clarinet: Vital solos in Dahl's *Sinfonietta* and Grainger's *Lincolnshire Posy*, vital lines in Schoenberg's *Theme and Variations*. (Vital line in mvt. 2 of the band arrangement of *Capriol Suite* by Peter Warlock, a Grade 2 piece!)

Contra clarinets: Few solos or uncovered lines. Opening of Chance's *Incantation and Dance*.

Soprano sax: Study score to see if it is being used as a specific color. Vital to some pieces by Grainger and in newer composers like Mackey and Grantham.

Bass sax: Rarely anything not doubled.

Horn: Vital color in band music, but often doubles other parts, especially in grades 1, 2 and 3. Lines easily substituted by saxophone, chords easily substituted by trombone/euphonium.

Tuba: The brass bass is vital to the sound of the band, but if missing, the part must be covered. When tuba differs from tenor brass (trombone/euphonium), the part must be covered, attempting to get as many notes as possible in the actual register of the original part.

String bass: Check for any solos or parts not doubled.

Harp: Synthesize or use piano (or omit).

Celeste: Synthesize or use piano.

Piano: Synthesize.

Chart for Rescoring Band Music

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Original	Substitution	Notes	Transposition
Piccolo	Flute	Same color, same key, with octave displacement	Write flute up 8ve (or accept it in the flute's octave)
Oboe	Flute	Uses vibrato, same key, good range	None
Oboe	Clarinet	Good range, but no vibrato	Write clarinet up M2
Oboe	Soprano sax	Great range match, uses vibrato, color closer than flute or clarinet	Write soprano sax up M2
English horn	Oboe	Best match, lowest range an issue	Write oboe down P5
English horn	Alto sax	Good color, uses vibrato	Write alto sax up M2
Bassoon	Tenor sax (mid bassoon range)	Uses vibrato, not useful for lowest octave	Write tenor sax up M9
Bassoon	Baritone sax (great for most bassoon range)	Uses vibrato, good range, except lowest 2-3 bassoon pitches	Write baritone sax up M6 + octave
Bassoon	Bass clarinet	Good range, but can't play lowest 2-3 bassoon pitches	Write bass clarinet up M9
Bassoon	Trombone or euphonium	Uses vibrato but can't play lowest fifth (or so) of bassoon range	None
Bassoon	Tuba	Uses vibrato, can play all of bassoon's lowest notes, tone much thicker	None
Eb clarinet	Flute	Only if Bb Clarinet cannot	Write for flute up m3
Eb clarinet	Bb clarinet	Watch for highest notes	Write for Bb clarinet up P4
Eb contra	Tuba	Range works well	Take contra part: change clef to bass, add 3b or subtract 3#
Eb contra	Bassoon	Range works well except lowest third	Take contra part: change clef to bass, add 3b or subtract 3#
BBb contra	Tuba	Range works well	Write tuba down M2 + 2 octaves, bass clef
Horn	Alto sax	Range good, color not bad for ww	Write alto sax up M2 from horn
Horn	Tenor sax	Range good, color not bad for ww	Write alto sax up P5 from horn
Horn	Euphonium	Color very good, not for highest horn parts	Write B.C. euphonium down P5 from horn
Tuba	Bassoon	Range good except below low Bb, same key	None
Tuba	Bass clarinet	Range good down to low Db	Write bass clarinet up M9 (and in T.C.)
Tuba	Eb contra clarinet	Range down to lowest Gb	Take tuba part: change clef to treble, add 3# or subtract 3b
Tuba	Bari sax	Range down to low A	Take tuba part: change clef to treble, add 3# or subtract 3b